



glad

Guidance and Learning
App for Adult Digital Education

GLAD toolkit 2 for parents: Dealing with my children

GLAD (2019-1-PL01-KA204-065555) is a European project to reflect & discover stories of parents in Europe to suggest and share practices to better usage digital tools and make our children grow strong and safe. Visit: <https://www.digitalparent.eu/>

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the second toolkit for parents of GLAD related to interpersonal skills and the relation with our children. You will explore how to maintain smooth relations with others as well as techniques for conflict management and negotiation with your children.

What would I learn on this toolkit?

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This toolkit is one of the three complementary toolkits that compose the GLAD manual for parents, a learning material focused on digital mediation and education of those parents interested on having a better performance when dealing with the relation between their children

and technologies at home. If you want to go further on your training, explore also the *first toolkit* of the project about understanding yourself and personal competences, and the third one about digital skills, technologies *management and parental mediation at home*.

TOOLKIT 2

DEALING WITH MY CHILDREN

As you can explore in the *first toolkit for parents of GLAD*, our self-consciousness and intrapersonal skills in ourselves are essential to properly handle the situations that ICTs will bring between us and our children. Besides this and coming back to the definition of parental mediation as the actions made by parents to manage the interaction of their children with the use of technologies, this toolkit will focus on the second of the three elements of this relation: our children, and more concretely, how to deal with them. When talking about parental mediation we need to deal also with the

bounds and relations existing between parents and their children.

In order to be able to have a suitable behaviour, parents must be able to emphasise concrete guidelines for a healthy use of ICTs while putting in practice their skills on human interactions. According to this, the next pages will show you the competences and processes that must be followed to set respectful human relations, improve our way to relate with others and communicate effectively or manage conflicts when needed. So let's start from the beginning.



2.1 HOW ARE YOU?



To properly develop all the skills that this toolkit will explore and know how to use them in a more suitable way, first we need to understand how we and the others are: OK or not OK. To be aware about the position of every person in a situation implies to find the best approach to proceed for everyone and demonstrates assertiveness, respect and empathy with others while allowing to

set boundaries when needed (ex. when treating our children and how they use technologies). Being in the same and appropriate position allows all the parties involved in the situation to feel listened to and with capacity to express their concerns while being able to defend their rights and interests.

We can use the next model to explain this:



Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis

● **I am not OK, you are not OK:** it happens when no one is pleasant for the situation. For example, when we use others as receptors of our bad feelings, as a punch bag to liberate ourselves (ex. when the computer is not working and we get angry). They get a negative impact while we still remain bad or even worse due to the threat given to others.

● **I am not OK, you are OK:** this puts us in an inferior position and reduces our self-esteem. Others can break our limits and invade our comfort zone, avoiding that we can defend our rights and interests. Dominant and restrictive family members, strict teachers or online bullying peers among others can produce these situations.

● **I am OK, you are not OK:** it is the contrary of the previous scenario. The extra problem is that being superior could sometimes be a sensation that can catch us making us feel more important. This makes it more difficult to go out of this position if we are not focused on the situation and notice this issue. In these situations, we tend to highlight others' limitations, become smug, narcissistic and produce anger and negative reactions in those we deal with (ex. when teaching someone to use a device and making fun of his/her lack of knowledge). It is a trap that too authoritative or restricted parents sometimes fall unconsciously on their parental mediation.

● **I am OK, you are OK:** "this is the way!". It is the scenario we should try to achieve and in which everyone is on the same level to share, discuss and meet agreements considering the rights and needs

of everyone involved. Everyone is comfortable and happy, which makes everything smooth and facilitates relations, finding solutions and managing conflicts with the cooperation and benefit of all the parties involved.

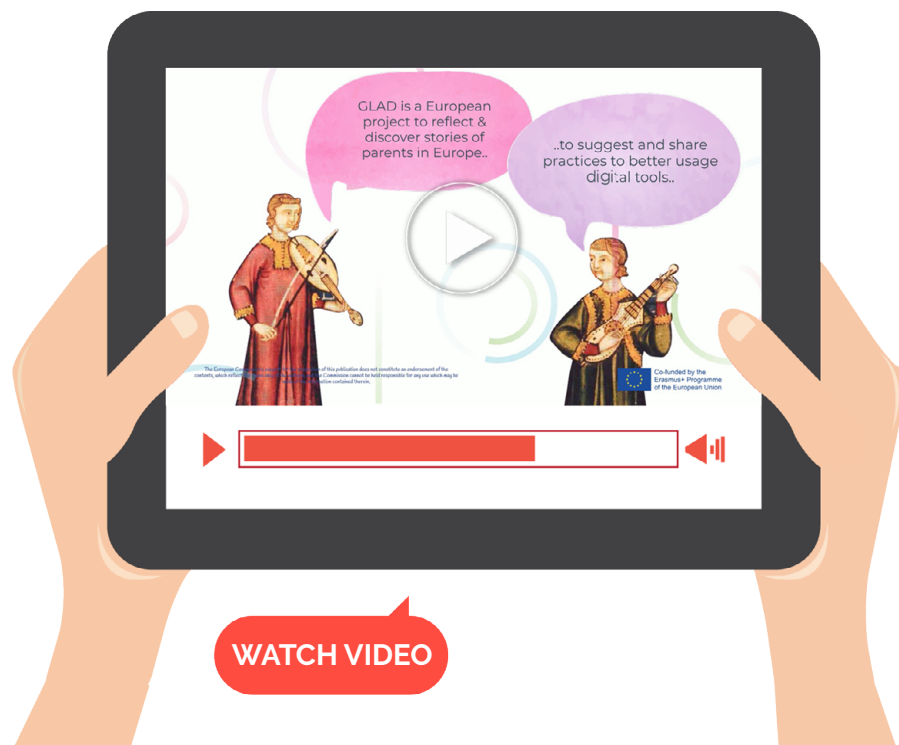


Being aware about our status on each situation and balance between all the parts involved will

benefit us in any situation at a personal, family and professional level. This will make possible to have a suitable relation with our children, agree the rules to use ICTs at home and establish our parental mediation capacity while being able to subsequently apply of our interpersonal competencies. But wait a minute, what do we mean with "interpersonal competencies"?

GO TO EXERCISE SEEING WHERE YOU ARE STANDING >

2.2 INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCIES (PARENTS - CHILDREN)



Interpersonal competencies are those skills that make us interact with others while fostering beneficial relationships (at health, physical, online and/or social level). No one lives in a bubble in the

current interconnected world and dealing with people is an everyday pathway we need to go through in a more smooth and pleasant way for all of those involved. These competencies allow us to give and receive feedback from others, find agreements, manage conflicts, understand other needs and behaviours, satisfy our expectations, etc. According to this, they are essential at home as children never come with an instruction manual and ICTs sometimes come with too much. Why are these competencies so important?

- They allow us to work together with others, which makes you more effective while taking advantage of others knowledge, skills and support.
- They make suitable communication possible, which reduces misunderstandings, conflicts and fosters more friendly relations.
- They reduce clashes, which facilitates arriving to deals with others, set limits or find agreements (ex. on the screen times of our children).
- They set healthy relations between people, which promotes a good mood on the interaction (face to face or online) that we have with others and derives on experiences we all can enjoy and get pleasure from.

Many are the interpersonal competencies existing, but we will highlight here the main ones that are related to parental mediation, dealing with our children and ICTs use guiding:

● **Active listening:** It means not only to hear our children (or other people), but really listen to them and process what they are telling us, giving them the floor to properly share their concerns and ideas. Follow these five steps to practice it: Pay focused attention to your child, show with your body language that you are listening (ex. smiling or moving your head), give feedback and be sure that you understand (ex. what do you mean?), avoid interrupting if he/she has not finished the exposition of an idea and, finally, give an appropriate answer in an assertive, polite and honest way.


● **Be an effective communicator:** once you become an engaged listener, work also on the way of expressing yourself. Think first on the words you choose when transferring your messages and select the best ones to be as clear and concise as possible (ex. Which expressions or terms my children will understand better?). Be sure that you are expressing yourself freely and with respect but do not be dominated by your emotions. Be aware also of your body language so it goes with the message you want to transfer. Pay attention to other nonverbal signs to see if your children are understanding or how your words are impacting them. The next sections of this toolkit will also help you to add

assertiveness to your relationships in order to have more effective communication when implementing your parental mediation.



● **Empathy:** It is the capacity of understanding others' emotions and identifying what they could feel in concrete situations. It is about putting ourselves in other's shoes, imagining us in that position and trying to understand others' points of view, feelings and reactions to that scenario (How do my children feel now? Why?).

● **Caring for others:** It is the capacity of being concerned and showing kindness about other people. Caring people provide prudence and protective attention to others in a helpful and empathic way. As everything, it must be given to our children on its appropriate amount, as too much caring could mean their over protection and limit their freedom while blocking their development.



● **Teamwork:** It means to interact with others inside a group towards common goals and results (Ex. You, your couple and your children). Good team (family) members offer support to each other and try to contribute as much as possible but at the same time, give the floor to others to make proposals and collaborate too in a fair way according to their competences and diverse backgrounds. This is essential on parental mediation on which a knowledge on different issues must be combined together with experience on guidance and educative values that each member of the family can bring in a lower or higher level. A good team is also able to be more efficient on problem solving and decision-making thanks to the sum of all its qualities: "Coming together is the beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success." Edward Everett Hale.

● **Leadership:** It is the capacity of guiding others and coordinating their efforts towards the achievement of a goal. In relation to parental mediation, it is not the same as applying authority or power, but about having the vision of putting people first when a task must be completed or a conflict related to ICTs appears. Good leaders on mediation practice communication with their peers and teams, collect and consider their feedback, motivate them, have a positive view of situations, and try to encourage creativity to find suitable solutions for everyone through everyone's contributions and the whole family participation.

All these skills will help you as a parent to build and keep relationships with your children or other family members and properly connect with them. Their combination with many other personal ones such as flexibility, patience, motivation or assertiveness will allow you to better implement your parental mediation strategies as well as manage those conflicts that naturally appear when we deal with other people and technologies or to set negotiations to solve them.

GO TO EXERCISE
MY INTERPERSONAL PROFILE >

However, besides dealing with our emotions and how to establish healthy human relations, it is important to explore even deeper what happens when "the others" are our children. Here, the already mentioned empathy will have a central role as we would need to make the effort to understand our children's emotions to make better decisions and decide which digital education approach we want to apply on each moment or how to proceed towards everyone's benefit. This combination of measures to take care, interact, nurture, and grow up our children is what we would call our parenting style.



You can read more about these topics here:

• Interpersonal skills self-assessment

• How to Improve Communication Skills at Home: The Top 10

• Active listening with your children

• 9 ways to show empathy when your child is struggling

• 5 Tips for Cultivating Empathy

2.3 DIFFERENT PARENTING STYLES AND THEIR IMPACT




We understand as parenting styles the different strategies that we combine to raise our children and that can also influence the parental mediation approach of each father or mother. Depending on the way we intend to interact and raise our children in relation

with ICTs (and other issues), we can distinguish between different types of parental styles that are not exclusive to each person and parents usually combine along the education of their children. Sometimes parents apply them in a conscious way, but sometimes they do it unconsciously. According to this, it is important to be aware about the pros and cons of each of these approaches in order to identify better which one we could wisely use at any time when dealing with the relation of our children and ICTs, or which we should avoid as all of them could bring benefits or have a different effect depending on how they are perform:

- **Uninvolved Parenting:** these parents give a high level of freedom to children and put themselves aside from their pathway (some parents do it consciously and others unconsciously when they do not know what to do). They offer little nurturing and no discipline is used, so children tend to do what they want with devices or ICTs consumption (normally due to a lack of information or caring of parents). According to all of this, the communication and exchange of information between both parties is really poor. This style especially appears when dealing with ICTs as children's knowledge is sometimes higher on specific issues and parents do not find themselves capable of dealing with these technologies (which makes children more vulnerable in the digital world).

One example of an uninvolved parenting in relation to a wrong mediation would be to not control the access that our children do of the devices available at home and do not monitor what do they do or which content they visit. There are no rules for ICTs use at home, partners do not intervene on what children do online and they do not offer support for doubts or problems generated by technologies (or do not generate the pathways to benefit properly from them).



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What can I do if I am stuck on this style when dealing with ICTs?:

- a)** Share time with your children. Talk about ICTs, use devices with them or spend time together online: get involved. Play with them, ask them what they do while playing, rotate devices, etc.
- b)** Increase your communication and try to talk more often about any issue (ex. how your children are, what they have done today in their social networks or school, which computer games they are now playing, etc.).
- c)** Ask for professional help. No one has all the keys to parenting, so do not be afraid of asking for support from others such as teachers, social workers, ICTs trainers or people with experience. Evaluate first their reliability to avoid receiving wrong feedback and compare different points of view and sources of information if possible (practice your critical thinking).



○ **Permissive Parenting:** these parents show themselves as friends more than parents. According to this, the rules for children on ICTs are limited and parents offer limited direction or leadership, giving children the floor to figure out problems alone. This made the communication much open and bidirectional, but children tend to take decisions by themselves with no guidance, which makes it difficult for them to self-regulate or have a sense of containment (face to face and online). Expectations towards children are reduced or not set by parents who tend to be warmer.

One example of a permissive parenting in relation to a wrong mediation would be those who even if are worried about the wellbeing of children when using ICTs and have basic control on their use at home, they have one single approach for every child/person (instead of tailor made strategies) and prefer to accept children's choices when using technologies in order to avoid confrontation or criticism. These parents tend to be more responsive than demanding.

What can I do if I am stuck on this style when dealing with ICTs?:

- a) Practice by setting progressively sensible boundaries and implementing rules. Be sure that they are concise and the reason why they are set clear for your children (ex. tell children which information is suitable to upload online and why they must not talk with strangers online).
- b) Do not be afraid of being hated by your child, they will understand if all is explained, your target must be to guide and make them safe (especially online). Talk openly to them about what you expect from them when using devices or behaving online.
- c) Practice to be their model. Show with your actions what they should do and provide them concrete examples and guidance about when and how to use technologies. They must see you as a "leader" that they can ask when support or advice is needed.



• **Authoritarian Parenting:** these parents normally avoid negotiation with children and tend to use punishment or set tight discipline. The lack of parental mediation and flexibility makes them set strict rules that are not fully explained to children even though the communication is normally in one way (parents to children). These lack of feedback from children, make these parents have high expectations towards their children's performance of the tasks assigned. It could also minimise the opportunities that children have to deal with their own problems, which could reduce their resilience and determination in the future or other fields of life.

One example of an authoritarian parenting in relation to a wrong mediation would be to have very high rules and limitations on ICTs use, expecting total obedience from children but not thinking on their interest, expectations or self-learning (ex. telling them exactly which content they should visit). The rationale of these rules is normally not well explained to children, so children face punishments without understanding sometimes why, while being unable to develop their own self-control and regulation strategies (ex. Do it because I said so).

What can I do if I am stuck on this style when dealing with ICTs?:

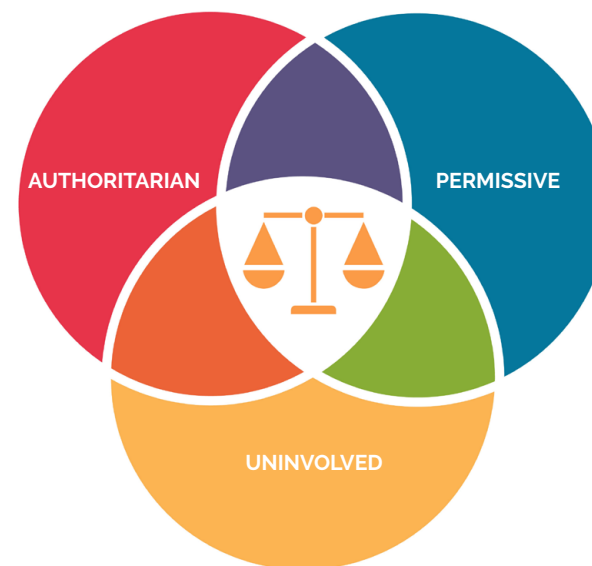
- a) Invest more time on speaking to your children and be opened to evolve boundaries or limits depending on each situation (always maintaining certain coherence between all the measures established).
- b) Try that children also have an input, are aware and influence on the things they do and live.
- c) Validate what children properly do or propose. The more they do things properly when using ICTs, the better it is to involve them little by little in decision-making processes (ex. planning what the family does in its free time or setting rules for screen time periods). Recognise their efforts.



Some parents tend to combine all these approaches even though they could generate different results as seen while trying to avoid the negative examples previous mentioned and that could happen too. However, to find the best style we must pay attention to all the issues that could affect our relationship with children and technologies (ex. two parents using different styles towards the same situation on ICTs abuse by a child; the influence of the child peers on his/her behaviour online; how a teacher trains the child on the school on internet use; etc.). The more information we are able to get from the child or the environment, the better to find the most suitable way to proceed. Use mindfulness to analyse how you behave and monitor your interactions with your children and technology in order to regularly improve your parenting and mediation strategies to see what matches better with them.

As you can see, there is not a secret formula to find the most suitable parenting style when dealing with ICTs, so it is interesting to find an intermediate solution that could meet together the best parts of each of the previous models putting aside indirect negative effects that they could bring with. We will call this approach: **Balanced Parenting (sometimes called authoritative parenting too)**.

As said by its name, those parents practising this style and trying to apply it to their digital mediation tend to offer a balanced nurturing. Even if they set high expectations for children, they try to have them totally clear while also having the chance of having input on them. To make this possible, the communication between both parts is



regular and adapted to each child's understanding and capacities. According to this, discipline and why it is used is understood by everyone, so children tend with the time to be self-regulated their ICTs use and think by themselves according to parents' previous guidelines. As guides, these parents make children see that their longer life baggage has provided them the experience that children can and should take advantage of. This opens the door to children to ask, exposing their points of view, being validated when needed and to parents to see when they can give children the floor to experiment but under relative control and safety. Ok, but how to achieve a balanced parenting and mediation style? Use positive parenting.

Principles of positive parenting


Even if we must never forget parents' self-caring as already mentioned in these chapters and *the first toolkit for parents of GLAD*, the centre of parenthood is always the child. This brings us to the so called positive parenting:

Positive parenting is the continual relationship of a parent(s) and a child or children that includes caring, teaching, leading, communicating, and providing for the needs of a child consistently and unconditionally". (Seay et al., 2014, p. 207).

The approach is based on the idea that children are born good, want to do the right thing and that parents can teach them without breaking their self-esteem, spirit and correcting their misbehaviour. Positive parenting is a lifelong journey focused on different principles that must be also applied to our parental mediation and the lessons that we want that our children acquire when interacting with ICTs:

- **Attachment and unconditional support:** it is the first bound with our children. They must feel safe when we care for them as this will facilitate that they follow our guidance and understand our boundaries (in the physical and digital world). They must feel trust and that we are not against them, that we will never fail them or abandon them despite what they do. This safety will also offer them the space to grow and learn appropriately while opening them the door to enjoy the benefits of using ICTs. The sooner we ensure this connection, the better children will build relations with us, others and avoid future behavioural problems, as children tend to please those who they feel connected to (even if this is an online connection).

- **Respect:** if you want to receive respect, show respect to your children. They deserve to receive an appropriate treatment from a physical, social and caring point of view. We must respect their dignity and understand that every child is different, so its unique personality must be also honoured during the process of being taught and considered when deciding with parental mediation we will use with him or her. This must not be confused with being "soft" or "too permissive" with ICTs, it is just about providing children their own space to explore online, contribute to their learning of digital skills and acknowledge their potential on this field (while taking care of their safety too).



● **Proactivity:** it means to tackle a potential problem when the first signs appear (prevent is better than cure). This does not mean to react in a fast way, but to respond by controlling ourselves, investing the time needed and being able to plan how to proceed on each situation or set the suitable boundaries on time. Many problems come from the lack of instructions to children or our impulsive reactions when conflicts related to ICTs appear. According to this, try to be connected with your children and use the time you spend with them to monitor what they do online and detect those issues that could make you foresee conflictive situations with technologies, that could demand to set boundaries or provide them concrete guidelines on their use.

● **Empathic leadership:** parents must lead their children's development and guide their online behaviour. However, despite having this leadership role, we can also show kindness and empathy towards our children and do not fall into oppressive or authoritarian positions when using ICTs (or in any field). Again, this must not be confused with permissiveness, it is about expressing our guidelines but trying to listen and understand as much as we can our children to cover their needs inside the boundaries that we could set. When children feel understood, they are more open to accept our leadership and come for advice.

● **Positive discipline:** far from punishment it is related to problem-solving training. Children must be provided with the skills to make better choices and correct or learn from their mistakes when they happen (especially on the digital world on which acts' consequences are sometimes not so easy to perceive). Positive discipline means to teach someone how to control impulses and misbehaviours, but not only when the child does the things wrong, also on positive moments you could share on which children can understand how to behave by focusing on their capabilities and not on their mistakes.

● **Assertiveness:** it is an essential skill that needs to be trained in order to allow parents and children to communicate in an effective way to solve clashes appearing from ICTs use. It considers the fact that we must calmly share our points of view and defend our position while listening to others and not invading their rights. This means to respect others' thoughts, feelings and beliefs as well as ours, not to assume other perceptions or try to impose our opinions on others. More about how to apply assertive processes will be explained further in the next sections of this toolkit.

Notice also that despite being focused on "parenting", this approach does not only make reference to parents and parental mediation, but it can be extensive to other caregivers who are present in the relation of children and technologies and contribute to their we-

ll-being (ex. older relatives, siblings, legal tutors, etc.). Have also in mind that the relationship with your children will evolve over the years, so do not be afraid of making changes or trying new things to adapt yourself to the situation and evolve your parental mediation strategies. Some easy exercises that you can practice with your children to train your positive parenting on ICTs could be:

Play with them and have fun (ex. share a computer game, watch a video together, etc.).

Read to them, comment on stories, ask them what is going on in the tale or what they think about the characters, etc. (using devices or books).

Encourage them and recognise their successes when using technologies and see that mistakes also bring learning.

Show them clearly what is right or wrong and why (especially on the digital world).

Offer them comfort and protection when they need it. Show your availability if they need you to use a device or surf on the net.

Do not only love them, say it to them too!

To make all this possible, identify your parenting style as soon as you can and analyse your mediation approach when dealing with your children and ICTs in order to improve. Notice that you can also apply the mindfulness tips explained on the *first toolkit for parents of GLAD* to analyse your performance and better respond to any situation. Applying mindfulness to the interaction with your children and technologies will help you to focus on the moment, explore the space you share with them (physical or online), stop and enjoy what you are feeling with all your senses, identify better how to proceed, etc. Have in mind that you can also teach this mindfulness to your children so they can also take advantage of the benefits it could bring to them on any field.

Besides all the previous information about parenting styles and interpersonal competencies, the rest of this toolkit will offer you extra guidelines about how to generate the suitable channels to put all in practice and why they are so essential to govern the relation with our children or intervene when needed in the appropriate way when using ICTs.

GO TO EXERCISE A WEEK OF
POSITIVE PARENTING

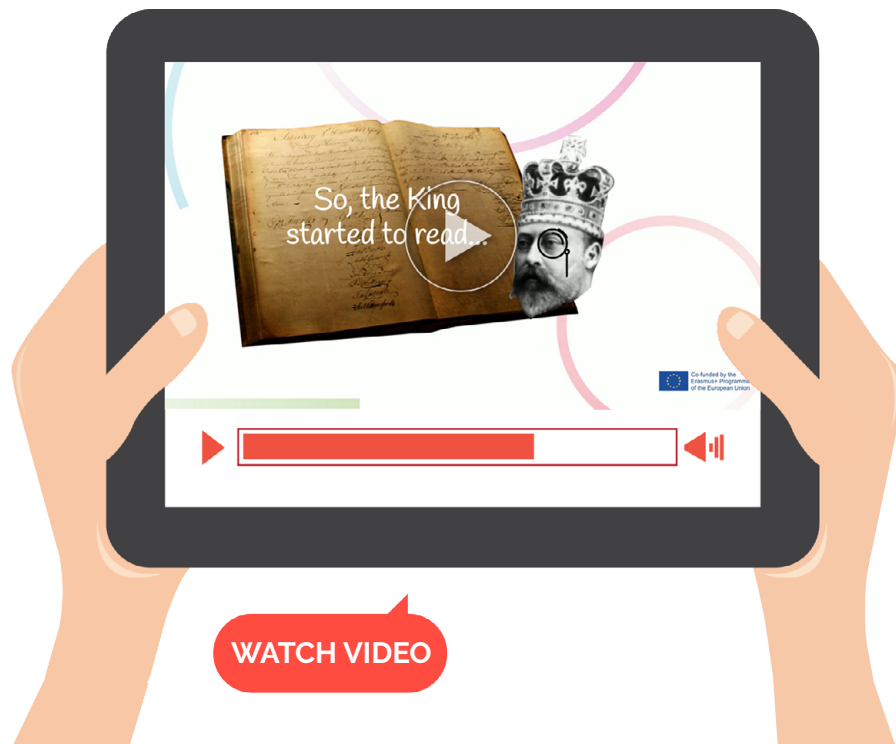




You can read more about these topics here:

- [*What type of parent are you \(video\)*](#)
- [*Parenting styles and their effects on children \(video\)*](#)
- [*What's your parental style? \(online survey\)*](#)
- [*TIPS about positive parenting according to the child age*](#)
- [*Mindfulness Practices for Parents*](#)
- [*Mindful Parenting - how to respond instead to react*](#)
- [*Mindful Parenting – Family Tool Kit*](#)

2.4 CONFLICT MANAGEMENT



One of the critical issues when practising our parenting is how to deal with conflicts appearing between family members. It is normal that conflicts happen in families, so the goal is to learn how to

handle them and understand which kind of practices need to be fostered in a family and what needs to be avoided. This is especially important when ICTs enter into the stage, as a restrictive mediation could increase the conflict between parents and children in relation to devices use. Contrary to popular belief, parent–child interactions within social media platforms and promoting the co use of devices have been shown to enhance their relationship by decreasing pre-existing conflict and fostering closeness between parents and older children.

According to all of this, now that this toolkit has shown us how to set appropriate communication environments for our mediation, defined the intrapersonal skills needed for suitable relations and explored the different parenting alternatives, it is time to merge all this information towards reaching appropriate communication and conflict management with our children when dealing with ICTs.

Language offers many expressions that block natural compassion because they are overfilled with moral judgments, judging comparisons, punishments, arousing feelings of guilt or shame, etc. Considering this and starting from the assumption that a person's natural ability is empathy towards other people and towards themselves, our objective should be to establish in our

families a non-violent, non-manipulative, respectful and efficient communication. This will help us to reach changes in the thought process and find common solutions to clashes that could appear in relation to technologies, observing without judging, relating the feelings experienced to needs, sharing ideas and formulating concrete requests instead of demands.

So, how can parents deal with their children to solve the appearing conflicts (related to technologies and any issue) in a suitable way? Using assertive communication. Get on with it!

Assertive communication for conflict resolution

Assertiveness will not only help you to find a balance between parenting styles on your mediation and be sure that a non-suitable one is dominant, but also facilitate your communication with children while contributing to reinforce their confidence and obtain benefits in many life levels.

*There is no better way to teach your child to be assertive than to **show him how to do it.***

Deidre Parsons, parenting writer.

Assertiveness will also allow you to discipline children while offering them a feeling of security and confidence, which reduces children's frustration and disappointment in many situations (and in many fields in their adult age).

Remember: your job is to set the limit, not to control how your child feels about it or reacts to it. So focus on what you can control – yourself and how you act. Tell your child their behaviour isn't going to get them what they want and walk away."
EmpoweringParents.com

Some parents tend to feel bad in concrete situations with technologies or when restrictions on devices use are set for their children once they see children's negative reactions. However, it is important to remember that even if children could get angry or disappointed with us, it all will help them to learn how to deal with anger, frustration and other feelings, making them be more mature and balanced in the future. Moreover, if this assertiveness is transferred to children, you will be able to obtain a learning environment at home where relationships could be reinforced

while children are trained to tackle future challenges that they could face on the “outer world” and the digital one.



Thanks to all of this, the relations between you and your children will be stronger. They will notice that you will be able to understand them, give them guidance when dealing with technologies and

support them when needed. This will promote that they also respect your advice more and are open to ask for it towards obstacles that they could face.

Benefits or assertiveness for children and related to ICTs:

- They feel safer once rules are understood and see parents as an extra support who care about them towards their benefit.
- They are able to set the bases of a relation with another person and better enjoy the benefits that human relations bring (even if they are online).
- They feel listened to, understood and that their opinions care too.
- They are able to listen and consider others' points of view while being kind and polite in answering them.
- They become more independent towards coming obstacles and reinforce their capability to find solutions, but also able to tolerate frustration and learn from failure.
- They acquire solving-problem skills and are more able to make responsible decisions (online and off line).

How can I develop assertive communication?

Assertive communication towards conflict management is a process that can be divided on six steps or stages that should be followed and completed when a problem related to ICTs appears:

- a) Find the place and moment.**
- b) Revise your style (aggressive, passive, assertive).**
- c) Be clear on the situation.**
- d) Express your feelings.**
- e) Set precise instructions and alternatives. Define boundaries.**
- f) Share positive results and consequences, build friendship and confidence.**

Let's see all of them one by one:

a) Find the place and moment

Detect those moments or times where you have more facilities to be assertive and use them to start to talk with your children and deal with the problem. Identify also those that are not good for this and practice in order to overcome them or find others on which your capacity of being assertive is better so they can be chosen to deal with your children about sensitive issues. Think also when the best moment for the other person is, that you are alone (have privacy),

can speak quietly and have enough time to maintain a complete conversation.

b) Revise your style (aggressive, passive, assertive)

Being assertive is the balanced point between two poles that people move between: passiveness and aggressiveness. Our style will depend on the situation, our personality, esteem, etc. so it is important to be aware about how we are and practice towards the mentioned balance:

- **Passive:** these people usually do not get what they want. They prefer to satisfy others' desires rather than taking care of their own rights. They tend to feel like they are being used and undervalued. "I will do it, I do not want to discuss", "Do not worry about how I feel".
- **Aggressive:** they need to get what they want and when they want without considering others' rights or needs. They do not pay attention to issues such as others' self-esteem, expectations or integrity. "You will do what I want", "Listen to me and shut up", "You do not understand".
- **Assertive:** it is the middle point. These people may not get fully what they want, but they are able to fight for it, maintaining their integrity and self-respect. Their behaviour does not only protect them, but also takes into consideration others' feelings, concerns and expectations without hurting them, which reduces the possibilities of conflict and makes it easier to arrive at common agreements that could satisfy all parts. "I think we can also do other things, what about...?", "I felt upset when I heard I cannot...".

Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
Speaks softly, weakly or is not expressive	Speaks firmly, openly and directly	Speaks very noisily and loudly
Afraid to speak up	Delivers clear messages	Interrupts others
"Too nice"	Regular, conversational tone	Talks over others
Fallen shoulders	Relaxed	Invades others' personal space
Shrunk	Open stance	Stands rigidly, tense
Avoids eye contact	Good eye contact	Glares, stares at others
Powerless	Powerful	Threatening
Passive	Active	Attacking
Weak or no personal boundaries	Good boundaries	Rigid boundaries
Low self-esteem	Self-confident	Low consideration of others
Isolates self from groups	Participates in groups	Controls groups
Nervous hands	Relaxed and simple hands	Closed fists

As you can imagine, to be assertive on parental mediation must be the goal to reach, so how can we identify our style? You can pay attention to different behaviours when you talk with your children about technologies (or any issue) and physical signs to help you on this task. These signs will allow you to identify your style as well as

the one of others that should be considered when you deal with them in one or another way (ex. if you deal with a passive person be sure that he/she shows what he/she needs and is not putting aside his/her needs. Do the contrary with an aggressive person, be sure you are not invaded and that you are listened to).

c) Be clear on the situation

Before starting a conversation to find an agreement from an assertive point of view or deal with a conflict emerging from ICTs and devices use, you must start by mentioning the concrete actions or issues that happened and generated the problem or topic to be discussed. When doing this, please remember:

- Do not be nervous before you make a move to proceed in a sensible way.
- Use a confident and calm voice to communicate.
- Describe the specific actions or episodes that happened, that you already know and the other person or your child are aware of. They should be clearly identified by everyone (ex. "This morning I went to your room and I saw you using the phone instead of sleeping"; "I saw you watching content for adults online"; or "I was looking for my phone and I was not able to use it as you were using it instead without asking"). Do not lie or make assumptions about things you are not totally sure that they happened (or ask first).
- Be clear and use short sentences.

❖ Do not use subjective perception (ex. “you behaved wrong” or “I did not like that website”) as the other person really needs to understand which is the problem (ex. What is wrong with you? Do we have the same idea about “wrong” behaviour? Why you do not like this website for me? etc.).

d) Express your feelings

After sharing the facts, talk with your kid and express what you feel (you can practice in front of a mirror if you do not feel confident at first). Try to use “I” sentences as they are not blaming the others, judging or criticizing, which preserves you to make the child attacked or react in a defensive way: I feel like.... I noticed... I thought that...




Remember that you cannot control others' feelings or behaviours (and others cannot see inside of you), so try to listen to your own body and mind to detect yours and share them with others when needed. Have also in mind that “I” messages can be used towards positive reinforcement and to show approval: “I liked how you offered me your help with that tablet. I felt more secure and listened”.

On this stage, you can also give the floor to your children to share what they feel. This is important as children sometimes are not mature enough to take a step forward to talk or are just still not able to put names to their feelings, which makes them suffer and frustrate them. Active listening will be essential here to allow you to identify what they are feeling and to give an appropriate answer responding to their statement.

e) Set precise instructions and alternatives. Define boundaries.

If possible, plan instructions to be given before intervening or related to a problem that you could foresee. This will help us to keep us safe and on negotiation issues if they are used in a preventive way to discuss an upcoming event or action. Try that your children are aware in advance about the rules on using technologies that you could set and not after the issue has happened. This will provide you also the space to see children's reactions in a controlled scenario and deal with the negative reactions (online or offline) that they could have in advance, supporting them on the management or dealing with these feelings when dealing with technologies or other users online.



When the previous planification and prevention is not possible, after taking care of the steps a), b), c) and d), explain to children the limits that you will set to avoid that a bad episode and situation will not happen again. There are many useful boundaries in the world that help us to interact with others. Some are physical (ex. a stop sign) others are emotional (ex. our comfort zone that sets us far from things that hurt us). According to this, to set them and explore them with your children in relation with ICTs will be useful in many scenarios to promote respect. Limits are essential for children in order to reach an appropriate socio-emotional maturity when using or interacting through technologies, so consider them in connection with behaviours, times, devices or spaces used.

When sharing and discussing boundaries with your children:

- Be clear on what you want, your expectations and be persistent until it is followed.
- Explain why. Give short reasons and brief arguments so you are better understood.
- Give direct requests on behaviour, devices use or technologies management.
- Give emphasis to the most important issues or ideas.
- Not blame or shame your children, make them notice that they

are capable of meeting your demands when using ICTs and others they could face in the future on this field. They may feel frustrated, so train their tolerance to it.

- Make your children calmly understand why you set those limits in relation to technologies and towards their own benefit. If possible, be sure that you give the floor to your children to express themselves about this too.
- Allow your children to choose too and make decisions between alternatives that you could consider suitable and appropriate on online scenarios. Children will feel more open to cooperate and find agreement if they can participate in the decision-making process. This will also make your children feel more confident, loved and independent.
- Be consistent and coherent between the limits you set and the things you do (ex. setting screen time). Try that your criteria for each decision are understandable and do not change them, as if children see that you change your mind, they will not understand why you set that limit. If you are setting these limits with your partner, be sure that both of you agree on what you will say to your children or they will receive contradictory and confusing information (what will make these guidelines not reliable). It is important that children are aware that both of you fixed these boundaries and will watch over them.

- Explore also with your children when they are ready to assertively say “no” as a right related to situations that could affect them in a negative physical or emotional way (ex. a child asks another one on the playground to give her/his phone in a rude way. They can have the right to say “no” or to oppose adults when inappropriate proposals are done online).
- Set expectations, not threats. If you foresee challenging situations related to technologies, tell your children in advance what you expect from them and why. Show them what would happen if they properly behave. Be sure that you set a clear connection between a behaviour and their consequence (negative or positive).



Despite all of this, try to be sometimes flexible to adapt your established limits to concrete and special situations as well as to your children's points of view. It is always good to focus on children's expectations in relation to ICTs, so all the topics discussed are seen as a contract between the parents and the children and not only as a decision (concession) coming from the parents.

Notice that assertive communication will help you to set a dialogue, but also the other person's requests should be heard, and we could even get a “no”. Sometimes when dealing especially with other adults we will not get exactly what we want, but you will most of the time get part of your petitions and be sure at the same time that you have not hurt others' feelings and you have been respected too.

Dealing with technologies puts us on the next level of negotiation and limits setting, as every day we must face the appearance of new games, devices, apps, social media, etc. that will demand us a constant recycling of our knowledge and skills. We must not be experts but try to ensure that technology is not out of control inside our families. Children must understand and be aware that having devices or using them is not a compulsory right, but a privilege they can fortunately enjoy. Some fields on which limits or rules could be set in relation to technologies can be found in *the third toolkit for parents of GLAD* and related to screen time per day, places to use devices, content approved by parents, etc.

f) Share positive results and consequences, build friendship and confidence


When explaining limits to your children on ITCs use, they must understand that rules are setting a healthier space for everyone and that you are taking care of them as parents. They must be aware that they are related to the decisions that children make, and that if they go against these rules or respect them, their behaviour could have concrete consequences. Do not forget that the final aim of setting consequences should not be to reward or punish the children, but to contribute that they learn self-discipline, discourage them from concrete behaviours and promote others (in the physical and digital world).

Remember that consequences should try to be immediate to better link them with a concrete behaviour and not too prolonged as they can lose their meaning and effectiveness with children. Talking about consequences, parents tend to use two types: positive and negative:

a) Positive consequences: they show to our children that they have behaved properly and followed our instructions. When this happens, they reinforce a behaviour and promote that children repeat it again in the future. It is important to recognise when

children do things properly according to your guidelines. It is not about material rewarding, but about encouraging them to go further with those positive behaviours. Some examples of positives consequences could be:

- Show the benefits: make children aware about how what they do is positive for everyone (including you) in such a way (ex. not insulting people on social networks so they are not contributing to bullying attacks).
- Recognition: you praise and congratulate them when they did well (ex. "You really did a good job", "You were very helpful with...", "I really liked how you...", etc.). Try to catch them when doing something good and do not wait until they tell you so they can feel valued (ex. they stop to use a device when the time to go to bed comes).
- Positive attention: you respond to your children with warmth, love and interest when co using technologies (ex. smiling, hugging, encouraging them, showing interest in their hobbies, etc.).
- Tangible rewards: you offer them a privilege or extra activity they can do (ex. watch a movie or go outside to the playground). Some families also use Token Economy models to practice these tangible rewards in relation with ICTs.



b) Negative consequences: they show your children that what they did or how they used a device should not be repeated. They are related to discipline and should not involve practices such as yelling or spanking that could generate more negative effects on children. Some examples of negative consequences could be:

- Assuming responsibility: children take care of the results of their actions (ex. if they make a screen dirty, they should clean it).
- Time-out: if they are not able to use a device properly, remove it from their hands until you have taught them, they have understood how to use it or they are in a calm space on which they could quietly manipulate it.
- Ignoring: not paying attention when they have a tantrum due to the removal or not use of a device and just explaining to them why the retirement happened so the triggering issue does not happen again in the future.

Both types of consequences have a different approach. Positive ones are proactive, which means that they motivate children towards concrete behaviours. Negative ones are reactive, which

means that they respond to a misbehaviour of your children that you want them to change. A combination of both is most of the time needed on parental mediation when raising our children and depending on each situation. Despite this, notice that showing the positive consequences in advance will not only benefit all the parts involved and promote happier moments related to technologies, but will also train your children to realize that they can also have the potential to do good things, which could be very useful for them in their personal lives, professional careers and on digital environments.

GO TO EXERCISE
THE PERSON IN THE MIRROR



You can read more about these topics here:

- [*Conflict management for parents*](#)
- [*How Parents Can Manage Conflict with Their Children*](#)
- [*Raising Assertive Kids*](#)
- [*The mouse, the monster and me tale \(assertiveness for children\)*](#)
- [*Explaining children the three models with animals*](#)
- [*The colour Monster \(tale to help children to identify feelings\)*](#)
- [*Teaching assertive communication \(also with children\)*](#)
- [*Question Guide to help parents understand why their parenting style might not work*](#)
- [*"How Assertive am I" – demonstrates the level of "assertiveness"*](#)
- [*Handouts and worksheets for conflict management and communication*](#)
- [*Negative consequences: how to use them in behaviour management*](#)
- [*5 Common problems with token economy reward systems for kids*](#)

2.5 CONCLUSION

Dealing with our children brings the double challenge of fostering relationships and cooperation with others, while demanding us to keep our role model of guides and educators for them. Acquiring and putting in practice our interpersonal competencies will help us to build stronger and healthy relationships, providing warmth and structure in the interactions with them and our parental mediation actions. Thanks to assertive communication we can work on finding common agreements, contributing to reinforce relations with children as well as friendship with others while making them aware about our needs and feelings on the use of ICTs. Remember that conflicts are natural and also happen between people who love each other, it is just about solving them in the most suitable way for everyone. Understanding how children feel and think, will help us to apply with them a problem-solving approach when dealing with technologies or devices rather than a punitive one that will provide them self-behaviour patterns while helping to achieve our long-term parenting and mediation goals.



ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY

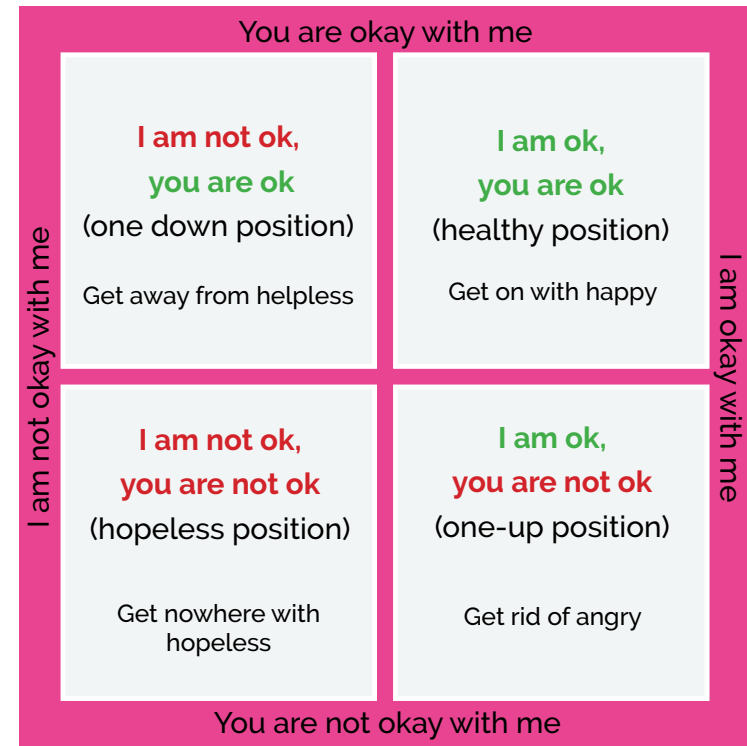


SUBTOPIC: 2.1 (How are you?)



TITLE: Seeing where you are standing

Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis is a useful tool to understand our reactions and general behaviour in certain situations. In the case of parent-child relations, it might help to shed some light in why communication succeeds or fails by looking at the position of the parties involved.



For this exercise, take a moment and bring in mind 3-4 recent situations when there was a miscommunication or conflict with your child/ren, partner or another peer. Consider the context for each of the persons involved and having in mind the model presented and explained in chapter 2.1 of this toolkit, try to identify on which situation you were. Then, with compassion and without judgement, observe how you reacted and see if and to which extent that reflects everyone's position.

Situation	Location? Time? Who were there? What has happened?
My context	Which previous actions to the situation affected my mood? What were my feelings? How did I see the situation? How was my reaction and behaviour? What did I say/answer?, etc.
The context of my children	Which was their situation? What were they doing? Which feelings of behaviours were they experiencing? Which were their reactions? What did they say/answer?, etc.
Position	Choose one: I am not OK but they are ok, I am not OK and they are not OK, I am OK but they are not OK, I am OK and they are ok.
A step further	How should the situation change so all the parts are "OK"? What could I do? What shall I request the others to do? What would you do differently?, etc.

For example:

Situation: Last Thursday afternoon, we had an intense argument with my 13-year-old son who instead of studying for the Maths test he had the day after, he spent the whole afternoon playing video games. We both ended up angry, frustrated and exhausted.

My context: I had just come home after a very long and tiring day at work and on top of everything with a splitting headache. Finding that my son had not studied at all made me stress and lose patience.

The context of my children: It is the second week full of tests and he has been stressed out lately. He struggles a bit with Maths and when he does not manage, he gets frustrated. After getting a pretty low grade in the last test, he needs to study even harder to make up for it. Also, adolescence is a particularly difficult age.

Position: "I am not ok; you are not ok"

A step further: I could check with him if we can build a calendar of work to ensure that he studies but also that he has free time to disconnect; I could try to relax more before coming home and maybe do some mindfulness on the way home to relax myself too; etc.

If you are doing this activity with a partner or in a small group, share your experience with your peer(s). Make sure you listen actively and exchange feedback and even some ideas and good practices.



ACTIVITY



SUBTOPIC: 2.2 (Interpersonal competencies)



TITLE: My interpersonal profile

As you have seen on the 2.2 chapter of this toolkit, there are different interpersonal skills that we should self-assess and try to improve towards a better parental mediation performance. According to this:

Step 1: Use the next template to analyse yourself on these skills and add others that you consider essential for a good parenting or digital mediation (you can use the last lines to add extra competences that you consider):

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Active listening										
Effective communicator										
Empathic										
Caring for others										
Teamwork										
Leadership										
.....										
.....										
.....										

Step 2: Once you have the template, use a symbol or X in a colour (ex. green) to rank from one to ten (1 -lowest and 10 - highest) how important these competences are for parenting and how important they could be when we mediate with our children.

Step 3: Once you have the score, it is time to rank yourself on these skills. Use a symbol or X in a colour (ex. orange) to rank from one to ten (1 -lowest and 10 - highest) how good you are on them. You can also ask the support of your partner or someone who knows you well to do this.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Active listening							X		X	
Effective communicator							X		X	
Empathic								X	X	
Caring for others						X	X			
Teamwork					X	X				
Leadership								X		X
ICTs skills					X		X			
Assertiveness						X		X		
Respect							X		X	

The target: X / Where I am: X

Step 4: When both scores are done, link the green symbols with a green line and the oranges with an orange line. This will allow to see where you can improve more, which competences you could already have (that you do not need to improve and that you can take more advantage of when being with your children), take decisions about which actions you could do to arrive to the top scoring, etc. Be honest when doing this exercise, no one will see the result besides you, so the more sincere you are, the better to learn and reinforce your skills (go back to the content if you want to know more about these skills and understand them).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Active listening							X		X	
Effective communicator							X		X	
Empathic								X	X	
Caring for others						X	X			
Teamwork						X				
Leadership								X		X
ICTs skills					X		X			
Assertiveness						X		X		
Respect								X	X	

The target: X / Where I am: X



ACTIVITY



SUBTOPIC: 2.3 (Principles of positive parenting)



TITLE: A week of positive parenting

Positive parenting needs to be trained. According to this, challenge yourself to apply for one week at least one of its principles with your children. Apply them on each different day to see how they work on each context and situation related to your home and children as you prefer (especially those related to ICTs).

- Do not only love your children, say it loud to them too!
- Play with them and have fun (ex. share a computer game, watch a video together, etc.). Play the app of GLAD with them and have fun!
- Read to them, comment on stories, ask them what is going on in the tale or what they think about the characters, etc. (using devices or books).
- Encourage them and recognise their successes when using technologies and see that mistakes also bring learning.

- Show them clearly what is right or wrong and why (especially on the digital world).
- Offer them comfort and protection when they need it. Show your availability if they need you to use a device or surf on the net.

If the previous step was too easy for you, once you have completed go to the content of the chapter about positive parenting, try to apply its six main principles on concrete situations and write what you did down, so you can generate a list of good practices of positive parenting at home:

Attachment and unconditional support:

Respect:

Proactivity:

Empathic leadership:

Positive discipline:

Assertiveness:

An remember, on the 7th day, rest and enjoy the time with your children, recognise the good work done, you deserve it!

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ACTIVITY



SUBTOPIC: 2.4 (How can I develop my assertive communication?)



TITLE: The person in the mirror

Assertiveness, as every skill, need to be trained to be completely controlled and having the capacity to use it in a natural and automatic way when a conflict arises.

To be able to implement it when mediating with your children, try to practice from time to time with yourself in front of a mirror (you can also do this exercise with you couple and help each other to analyse your performance and see how to improve). According to this:

- a) Find a quiet moment and space to practice.
- b) If possible, try to do this in front of a mirror or even recording a video with your phone. This is important so you can also see your body language and detect unconscious movements or behaviours that could have a negative impact in your mediation.
- c) Think about a real situation you want to simulate and related to the mediation with your children (ex. how to tell them to control their screen times or do not visit adult content sites).

d) Start to the practice and try in a single monologue to solve the situation going through all the phases of an assertive communication:

- Clearly explain the situation.
- Express your feelings.
- Set precise instructions and alternative. Define boundaries.
- Share positive results and consequences, build

e) Analyse your performance and try to improve:

- How was the exercise?
- In which stage did I have more difficulties? How could I improve?
- Which part was easy and I already control?
- How was my body language, reactions, voice tone, etc.? Should I change them or how can I take advantage of them to support my arguments? etc.

Variation: Transformation! If you have the chance to discuss and put this toolkit in practice with other parents in small groups, you can develop a short scenario where you indicate passive or aggressive parenting. You can base it on your own experiences or your current knowledge on the characteristics of these parenting styles. Then, present it to the group twice. The first time, the group participants watch to identify the wrong behaviours. The second time, they should intervene (by clapping once or saying "stop") and stepping in to change the dialogues or modify the body language on the "actors", as an effort to transform your scenario to match the characteristics of assertive and positive parenting.

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